



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF SERVICE TO THE  
BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

**FISCAL YEAR 2008  
YEAR END REPORT**



**SBVI**

## 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Governor Rounds:

The South Dakota Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) respectfully submits our Annual Report for 2008. The mission of the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is to provide individualized rehabilitation services that result in optimal employment and independent living outcomes for citizens who are blind or visually impaired. The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has collaborated with the Division of SBVI to ensure the best possible services for citizens who are blind or visually impaired.

To date, the Board has played an important role in strategic planning that will help to define future priorities for the Division. The Division's goals focus on improving SBVI services, increasing outreach efforts, and effectively serving those who are blind or visually impaired and have unique needs for specialized services.

Throughout this report, I trust that you will find evidence of the quality work that the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is involved in. The data, successful outcomes, and success stories illustrate the fact that SBVI is helping to positively change the lives of South Dakotans who are blind or visually impaired.

The Board of SBVI is committed to promoting services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, and we appreciate your support in that challenge.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rita Weber*

Rita Weber, Chair  
Board of SBVI

CC: Edward Anthony, Acting Commissioner, RSA  
Sue Rankin-White, RSA State Liaison

# **SD SERVICE TO THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED 2008 ANNUAL REPORT**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2008 brought opportunities and challenges to South Dakota Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI). The Board and Division of SBVI are pleased to provide this annual report to highlight another year of service to South Dakota citizens with vision loss. Please visit the SBVI web site at: <http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/> to learn more about the Board and Division.

The Board of SBVI provided input and direction on goals and strategies to improve services, facilitated public meetings to gain input from constituents and provided guidance to the Division on policies and procedures. This guidance ensures that optimal services are provided leading to employment and independence for citizens with vision loss.

Challenges included rising costs of services with limited resources available to meet costs. Belt tightening has enabled SBVI to continue to serve all eligible individuals in spite of resource issues. Thanks to the memorial account, older individuals with vision loss continue to have access to closed circuit televisions to access printed material. We will continue to address resource issues into 2009. We will ensure that access to services continues by prioritizing client services and continuing with fiscally responsible practices that protect the programs that benefit citizens with vision loss to achieve employment outcomes and maintain their independence in the community.

Thanks to quality services provide by trained, dedicated staff, rehabilitation and independent living goals are met by hundreds of citizens each year. SBVI is committed to providing quality training and supporting certification to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet consumer's needs.

We continually face the challenge of getting the word out about SBVI to those with recent vision loss and blindness. Marketing will continue to be a focus in the coming year to ensure that citizens with vision loss have the opportunity for employment and independence with minimal interruption in their lives.

In closing, I would like to encourage you to provide input on the future direction of SBVI. Feel free to make recommendations on how we can improve services. I also invite you to contact me if you're interested in serving on the Board of SBVI. Vacancies occur annually; service as a member of the Board of SBVI is your opportunity to make a difference.

Gaye Mattke  
Director SD Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

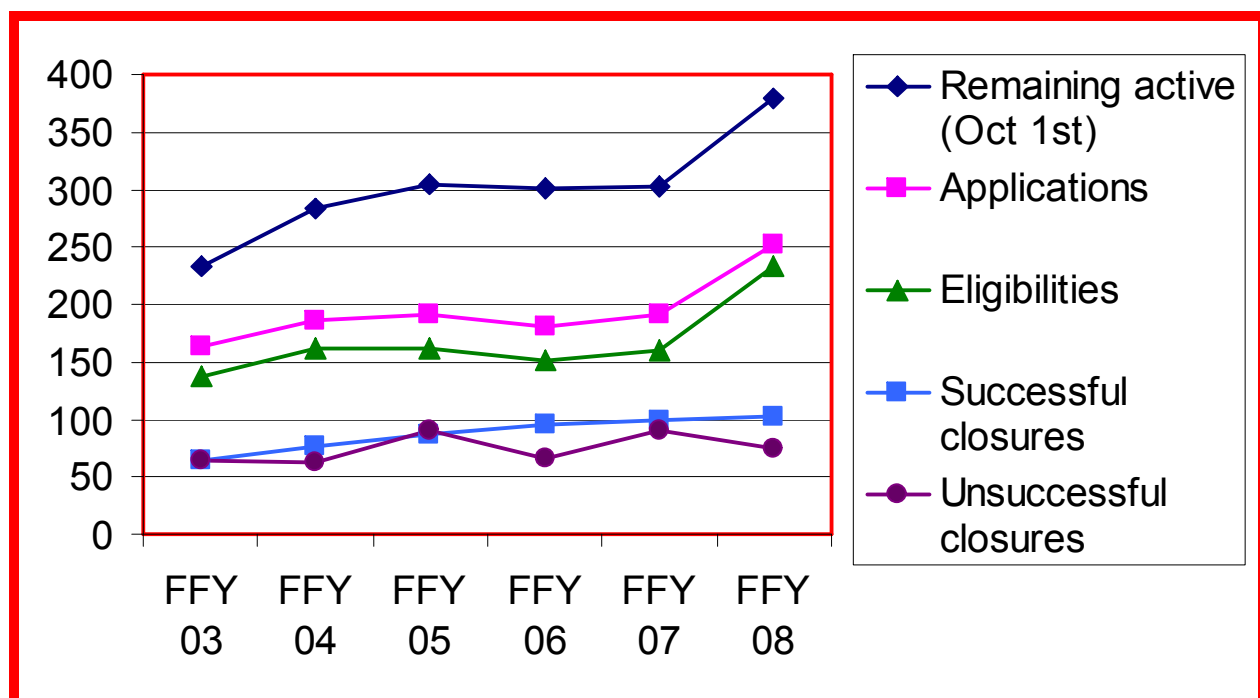
The mission of the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program is to provide individualized rehabilitation services that result in optimal employment outcomes for citizens who are blind or visually impaired.

### Federal Fiscal Year 2008 Performance

- 556 individuals were served through the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program during Federal Fiscal Year 2008 (FFY 08).
- 102 individuals who were blind or visually impaired were successfully rehabilitated through the vocational rehabilitation program in FFY 2008.
- 94% of the individuals closed successfully had significant disabilities.
- The average hourly wage for individuals who were successfully rehabilitated and placed in competitive employment through the vocational rehabilitation program was \$11.52 an hour and the annual income was \$20,653.88.

### SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Caseload Summary

The chart below illustrates the steady increases in consumers served through the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program over the past several years and the substantial increase experienced in the past year in applications (from 192 in FFY 07 to 253 in FFY 08). As the chart illustrates; an increase in applications results in greater numbers of individuals served and caseload sizes.



## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

### Program Evaluation

Data on Successful Closures	
Average age at application	47 yrs, 321 days
Average age at closure	49 yrs, 339 days
Average days from application to closure	2 yrs, 18 days
Ave. hours- successful closures competitively employed	34.49 hours per wk
Average cost of a successful closure	\$8,427.68

### FFY 08 Success Rates

	FFY 2005	FFY 2006	FFY 2007	FFY 2008
Percentage of successful closures vs. all closures of active consumers	73.1%	73.2%	74.0%	82.3%
Percent of successful closures age 14-24 vs. all closures age 14-24	40.0%	36.4%	68.8%	100%

### Federal Program Evaluation Standards

The federal government measures vocational rehabilitation agency performance in part by using 6 “Standard 1” performance indicators. A description of each indicator, its minimum performance level (in parenthesis), and SBVI’s performance on each indicator is illustrated below. SBVI is one of two vocational rehabilitation agencies for the blind in the nation to have passed all 6 of the Standard 1 indicators in the previous four years (FY 2004-2007).

#### Standard 1: Employment Outcomes

- 1.1 The difference between the number of successful closures during the current performance period compared to the number of successful closures during the previous performance period.
- 1.2 The percentage of individuals exiting the program during the performance period who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services.
- 1.3 The percentage of consumers who exit the VR program in competitive employment at or above the state minimum wage.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

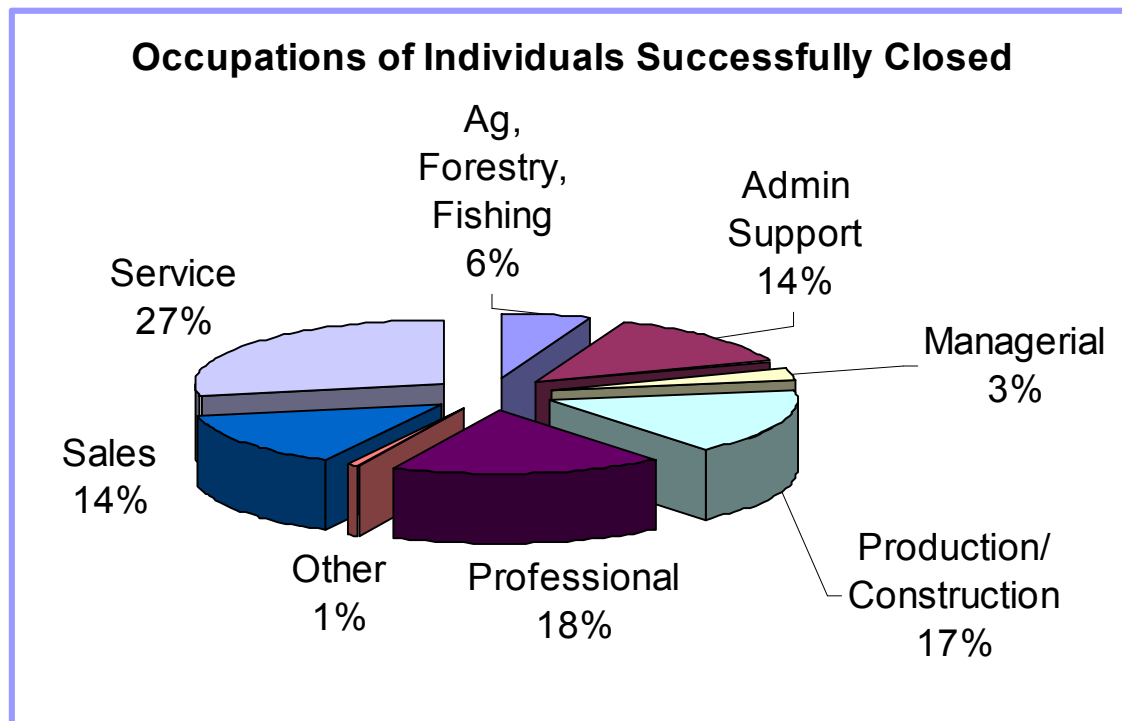
- 1.4 The percentage of those individuals who have significant disabilities who exit the VR program in competitive employment at or above the state minimum wage.
- 1.5 The ratio of the average hourly earnings of all individuals in competitive employment to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the state.
- 1.6 The difference in the percentage of individuals at application versus closure who reported their income as the largest single source of support.

### SBVI Performance on Standard 1 Performance Indicators

Minimum	1.1 >Previous Yr.	1.2 68.9%	1.3 35.4%	1.4 89%	1.5 0.59	1.6 30.4	Number Passed
2005	87	73.1%	95.1%	97.4%	0.73	31.61	6
2006	96	73.2%	94.0%	97.1%	0.70	37.21	6
2007	100	74.0%	95.4%	97.9%	0.67	40.64	6
2008	102	82.3%	99.0%	96.0%	0.78	31.00	6

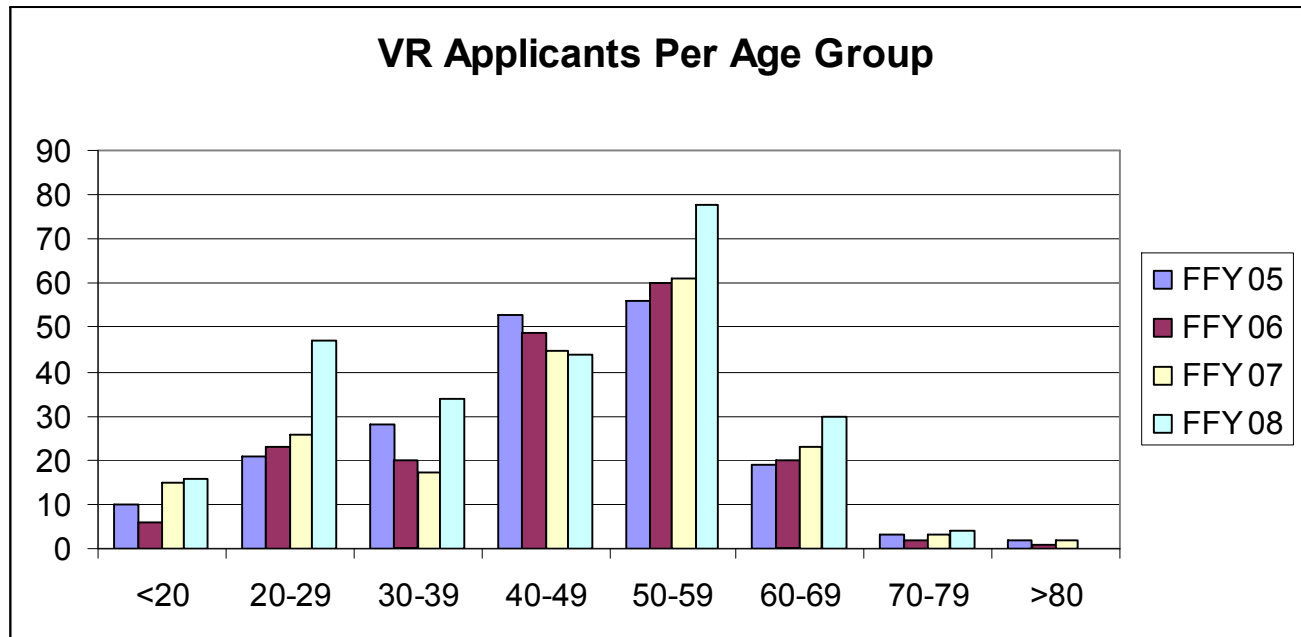
### Occupations of Individuals Closed Successfully

The following graph illustrates the occupations that individuals obtained who were closed successfully in the SBVI VR program in FY 2008.

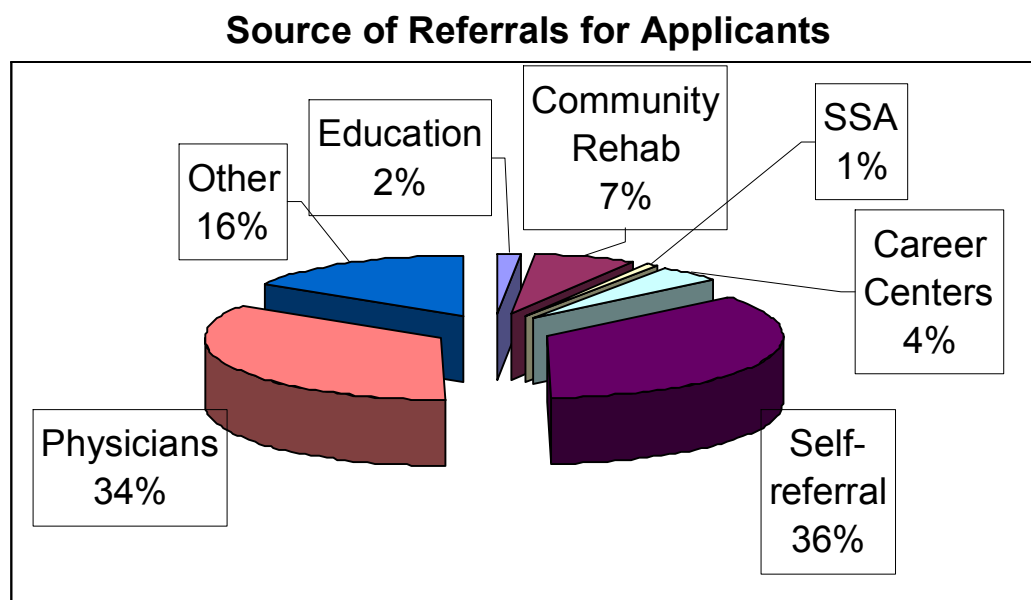


## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The following graph illustrates the age groups of VR applicants. The number of applications increased substantially from the prior year, with the 20-29 and 50-59 age groups experiencing the greatest increases. Although SBVI takes applications from individuals from age fourteen on, historically the majority of applicants apply for services between ages 40 and 59.



SBVI vocational rehabilitation counselors have become adept at conducting outreach activities in an attempt to educate the public on services offered by SBVI. The chart below shows that in addition to individuals contacting SBVI, optometrists and ophthalmologists are the second most frequent referral source.





## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

### Success through Perseverance

Henry applied for Vocational Rehabilitation services in June of 2007. He was working as a custodian, but was not working as many hours as he would like and wanted to receive assistance from Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired to find employment that better suited his skills and abilities.

Henry and I discussed his skills, areas of interest, and possible service options. An individualized plan for employment was developed so Henry could begin working with Black Hills Special Services to set up a couple of situational assessments to help determine what type of work he was interested in and what tasks he was able to perform. After each situational Henry and I would meet to discuss how he performed at the job, what he had difficulty with, and what accommodations could be made for the job to assist Henry if he enjoyed the work.

After working with Henry for several months, he worked a three day situational assessment at Capitol Motors where he detailed cars. This was the perfect match for Henry's skills and abilities, and he was offered a job. In order to accommodate his visual impairment, Henry's tools were adapted and job coaching services were utilized to provide additional supports to Henry. Henry began working for Capitol Motors eight months ago as a car detailer; he was washing and cleaning the interiors of 25-30 cars per week. Henry has received a number of raises since starting with Capitol Motors and has recently been promoted to the body shop where he will be assisting in repairing cars that have been wrecked or damaged.

Henry's employer states that he has a positive attitude, is always on time for work, and he enjoys being part of a team. His coworkers have helped Henry learn most of the daily tasks of his job and assist with moving the vehicles in out of the shop before and after they have been cleaned. In addition to his visual impairments, Henry was born with Downs Syndrome. Henry has been a role model to other individuals with disabilities and is currently participating on the Special Olympics basketball team. Henry has always been a hard worker and he never gives up. He credits the support received from his family and his co-workers as the main reason for his success.

*Submitted by Bridget Stoeser*

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

### **An Assistive Technology Provider Partners with SBVI to Develop Solutions**

Gene Longden was a certified teacher before he lost his sight. Since he was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, Gene had lost almost all of his vision and has had a below the knee amputation. He had lost his previous job, but was willing to do what it took to find something new. Gene and his counselor decided that he needed some classes to increase his computer skills in anticipation of future employment.

Gene has diabetic neuropathy and has very little feeling in his fingertips. He experiences difficulty feeling the keys on the keyboard and being able to sense when his hands are in the right position. His typing was exceedingly slow with many errors and it caused him a lot of frustration.

Chuck Fullenkamp, a DakotaLink technician, was asked to help with the assessment and recommendations that would benefit Gene. DakotaLink provides “technology solutions for life’s limitations.” Chuck was able to come up with a winning solution. He installed a keyboard with 1-inch square alphabetic keys. He also glued rubber O rings to certain keys to help Gene keep his hands in the correct position for typing text. However, the keyboard does not have a numeric keypad, something that Gene’s JAWS for Windows screen reading program makes extensive use of.

At this point, Chuck introduced a special numeric keypad made by Ergodex that allows for strategic placement of keys depending on the user and the need for those keys. “We were able to place the numeric keypad keys far enough apart so that Gene could put his fingers between the rows of keys to find his finger position without actually activating any key until he was ready to use it,” says Chuck. “We were able to try out key positions and then move the keys if they were too close for Gene to avoid striking them accidentally.”

With the help of SBVI and DakotaLink, Gene has been able to type and navigate the computer and use the Internet. Gene has completed two online classes at Dakota State University and is currently taking another class, with the goal of finding employment. Way to go, Gene, we wish you continued success!

## INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

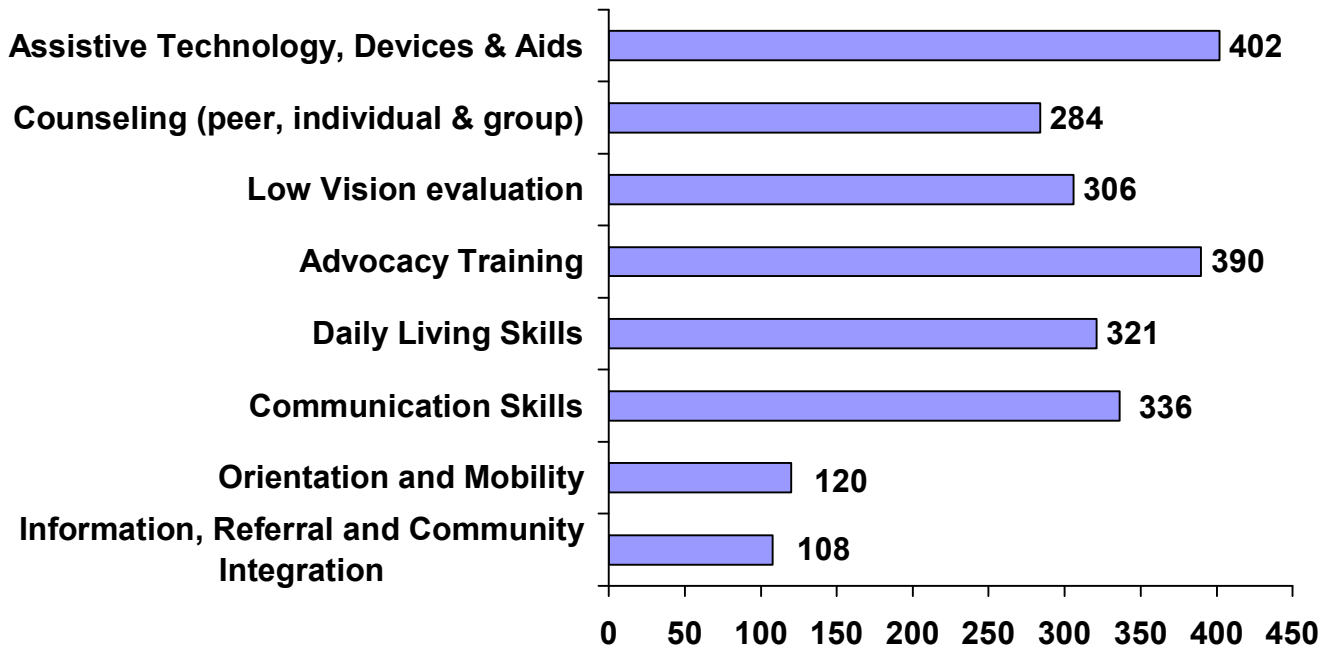
Many individuals believe that severe eye problems are a common occurrence and part of the aging process. However, findings from the 2006 National Health Interview Survey reveal the rate of vision loss among older Americans is significant. When compared to Americans 18-44 years of age, Americans 65-74 years of age were nearly three times as likely to report vision loss. When compared to Americans 18-44 years of age, Americans 75 years of age and over were more than four times as likely to report vision loss. In South Dakota, the target population for the Independent Living Program is over the age of 55, however 78% of the 448 people served in 2008 were over the age of 75 (see chart on page 11).

- In FFY 2008 Independent Living Blind Program provided services to 449 elderly blind individuals compared to 475 in FFY 2007. Staff successfully closed 218 individuals in FFY 2008 compared to 252 in FFY 2007. Services were provided in all areas of independent living: home management (which includes activities of daily living), communication skills, low vision skills, and orientation and mobility.
- In FFY 2008, 90% of the individuals served resided in their own private residence-apartment or home. In a survey conducted of individuals served in 2008, 20% of respondents stated that they had either briefly or seriously considered living in a nursing home but due to IL services that resulted in improved skills to compensate for vision loss, they are able to remain in their own homes.
- Macular degeneration was reported to be the major cause of vision loss in 70% of these individuals.
- Of the individuals served, 71% of the individuals were female compared to 29% male.
- In addition to providing services to the elderly blind, the Independent Living Blind Program provided services to 32 individuals under the age of 55 who required independent living skills training due to their vision loss.

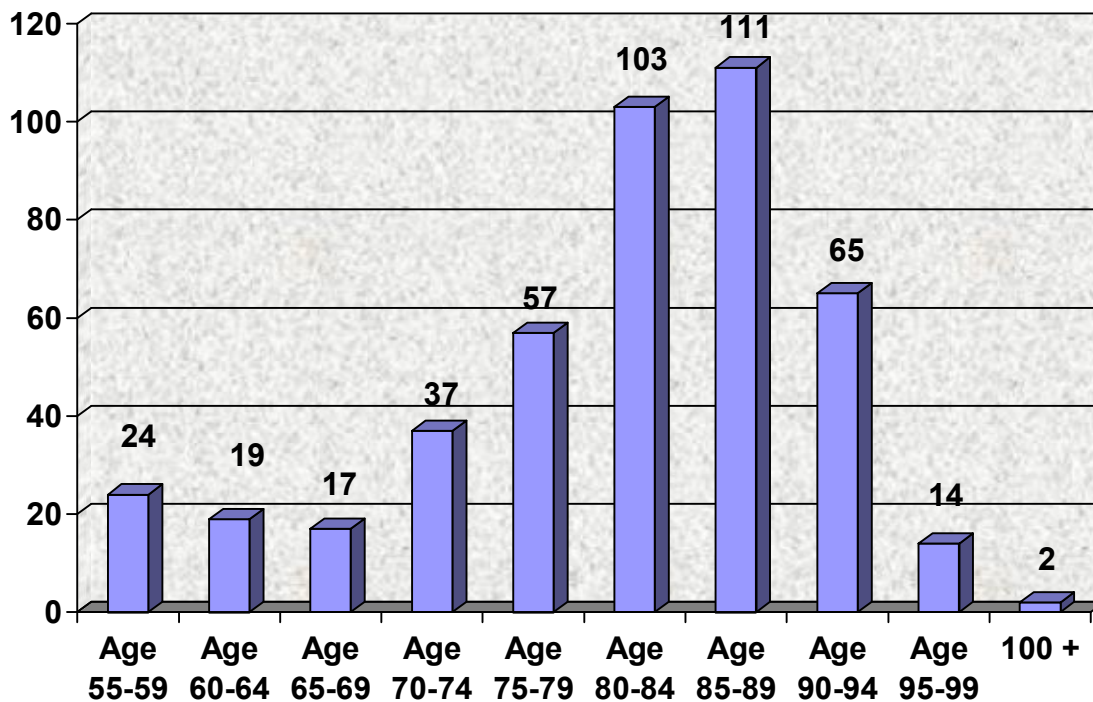
Older blind peer support groups offer a valuable opportunity to talk with others and share common concerns, frustrations and stories. Peer support services to elderly individuals with vision loss are available through 17 community based groups across the state. The majority of the peer support groups are led by volunteers who meet monthly throughout the year in settings agreed to by the groups. Guest speakers may be invited to present on a variety of topics or group members share their challenges and successes in overcoming obstacles experienced due to aging and vision loss.

## INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

### Primary Services Provided to ILB Individuals over the age of 55



### Age Range of ILB Individuals Served in FFY 08



## INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

### **Learning to Read Again**

After meeting with a gentleman who had limited visual fields who needed only minimal magnification, I was encouraged to try eccentric viewing with him. During my training, I learned that eccentric viewing training can be difficult for the majority of people and that most do not want to invest the time to learn it. Many people who attempt this technique find it to be frustrating because it requires practice and patience. Well, this gentleman was different than most! Along with his daughter, I was able to show them the beginning techniques. They were thrilled to learn that he would be able to train himself to read print again. Although reading will be different than before, he was excited that the reading techniques and exercises will help. Because of the magnification and eccentric viewing techniques, he is very hopeful he will be able to read his cards and letters again.

*Submitted by Erin Swenson*

### **Gaining Support through Vision Loss –Two stories of Peer Support**

I've had several visits with a 71 year old lady who is beginning to feel the impact of her vision loss in her daily life. Although she remains as active as she can, the feeling of helplessness was settling in on her. After a couple of visits, we were able to hone in on the areas where she felt most vulnerable and began working on low vision techniques. In addition to working on low vision techniques for home management, she has found comfort in meeting others with vision loss through a peer support group in her community. After returning to the office from a visit, I received a call from her stating that she was "happy to have someone in this together with her". It adds a special touch when we are reminded that we offer a lot of people an extra stepping stone they may need to remain independent.

*Submitted by Erin Swenson*

This past month I saw a reminder for myself about the importance of peer support. I arranged for transportation for 3 ladies to be picked up in their community in order for them to attend their low vision evaluation at the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center. Two of them already knew each other, but the third lady was pleased to make contact with others who have macular degeneration. I've encouraged her in the past to take part in her community's Older Blind Peer Support Group but she didn't think it would be for her. The day spent with the two other ladies influenced her to change her mind. The three of them had a great time. They each had their own evaluation, and I joined them for lunch afterward. They had a chance to talk with each other as well as students attending the Rehabilitation Center. They were provided with a tour of the facility which broadened their understanding of how vision loss affects others. They felt it was a great opportunity and strengthened their desire to build friendships through peer support.

*Submitted by Chelle Hart*

## REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND

Mission of the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC): *Provide assessment and training to individuals with visual impairments and or other disabilities so they may enhance their independence in their home, work and community.*

<b>SDRC Service</b>	<b>FY 2008</b>	<b>FY 2007</b>
Skills of Blindness	<b>44</b>	36
Employment Specialists	<b>55</b>	57
Transition Students	<b>9</b>	11
Low Vision Clinics	<b>92</b>	63
Employment Skills Training	<b>99</b>	73
<b>Total Served</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>240</b>

The people served at SDRC often have had life changing circumstances which result in a disability; learning to live independently or learning the skills to return to work can be overwhelming. Through training at SDRC we empower people to learn the skills to be independent and return to work.

Success comes in many forms and every day we see examples of people who experienced success as a result of completing training at SDRC. Training results in increased confidence of individual's abilities to live independently and care for themselves and others. Skills learned may result in a new career, the ability to continue working in a job, starting a new business, or pursuing post secondary education. Services are based on each student's interests and abilities.

In FFY 2008 SDRC provided skills of blindness training to 44 people across SD as well as Minnesota and North Dakota to overcome the barriers caused by vision loss. SDRC also provided staff development training to field rehabilitation teachers and counselors who work with older blind individuals to help them remain living independently. Professional training was provided to five staff from SBVI, and one teacher from Montana.

In addition, training was provided to four students from the University of SD Medical School as part of an agreement to promote diversity. The students attended three days and were enlightened to the abilities of people with vision loss and the resources available. Income from services provided to out-of-state professionals and consumers attending SDRC was \$26,312.50.

SDRC is often referred to as "South Dakota's Best Kept Secret". Efforts to promote services for consumers and professionals have resulted in an increase of students who participated in training during 2008. Outreach efforts will continue to ensure that this resource is utilized by those who can benefit from blindness skills and vocational training.

## REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND

The annual Transition Week offers opportunities for SD high school students to learn about careers, post secondary education options, job interviewing, resume writing and independent living skills. In FFY 2008 nine students attended and participated in activities that provided encouragement and direction to plan their lives beyond high school including options for careers that are suited to their abilities and interests.

Low vision clinics are held at SDRC throughout the year; in FFY 2008 92 people attended 17 clinics. Paul Greenfield, OD provides the examinations and demonstrates of low vision devices and Dawn Backer, Certified Low Vision Therapist, provides training and assistance with low vision therapy. Optometrists in private practice are also available to provide low vision services on a state wide basis.

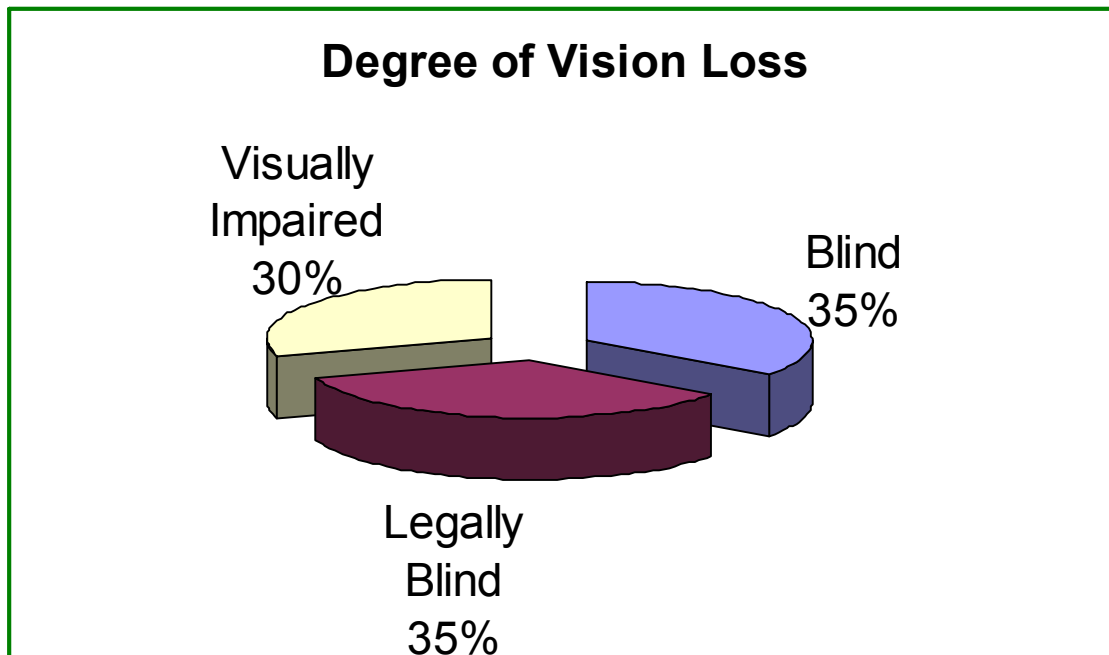
Early intervention to identify potential vision problems is critical to saving vision. Through the Prevention of Blindness program volunteers are recruited and trained to screen children and adults for vision problems. During FFY 2008, 1,910 adults and 405 children were screened for vision loss through units provided by SDRC. Of the adults screened, 307 were recommended to contact their eye doctor for additional testing. Of the children screened 22 were referred to eye doctors.

South Dakota Vocational Resources focuses on employment services. This vocational training unit receives referrals from both the Division of Rehabilitation Services and SBVI to provide assessment and training for individuals to return to work. Although this unit specializes in working with people who are blind or visually impaired, they also provide employment services to individuals with all types of disabilities. Employment skills training served 99 people in FFY 2008 which was an increase of 26 from 2007.

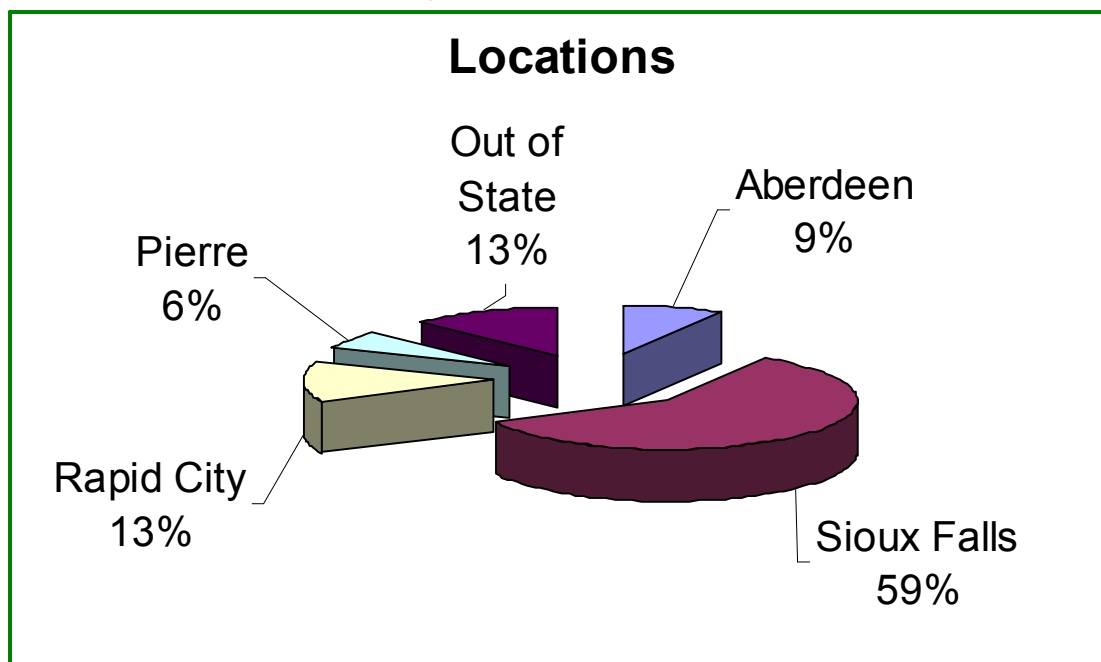
Employment consultants work with individuals to find employment. An employment consultant works with employers in the community and the individual to find a job that meets the needs of both the employee and employer. Employment consultants served 55 individuals during FFY 2008. SD Vocational Resources generated \$115,931.11 in fees in FFY 2008 for services provided to consumers who were not blind.

## REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND

The SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind serves consumers with varying degrees of vision loss, and customizes training based on the needs of the consumers. The chart below categorizes the students served at SDRC by degree of vision loss.



SDRC serves consumers from all across South Dakota and also accepts students from other states who need services. The chart below shows the percentage of students who come from each region of the state, as well as from other states.





## REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND

### **Program Highlight**

A new program was developed within the vocational resource unit called Job Readiness. This program was developed in order to assess job skills, abilities, and job search capabilities of vocational rehabilitation applicants. Counselors authorize for consumers to attend classes and use evaluation reports to help formulate an individualized plan for employment. Job Readiness also has provided an additional opportunity for consumers to gain confidence to pursue job placement.

### **Success Story**

Victor was referred to the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind because he wanted to learn just enough Braille to label items around his house. Being totally blind, Victor needed a method to identify items. He wasn't interested in additional services but agreed to participate in all classes initially. After two weeks he set new goals to learn grade one Braille, computer assistive technology, home mechanic skills, cooking, and other skills to improve his ability to live independently. Victor's confidence grew as a result of his participation in training. He became an independent traveler, Braille reader, and computer user. He shared that he was surprised that he was able to learn skills in so many areas while at SDRC.

After completing training in the skills of blindness Victor attended Employment Skills Training with SD Vocational Resources to learn specific computer programs such as Microsoft Office, Outlook and the internet. Victor was very positive and had a great sense of humor. Upon successful completion of both skills of blindness and employment skills training he decided he wanted to work with an employment consultant to look for employment. Victor continues to receive services at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, and is confident that the skills he has learned will allow him to find and perform well in a job he enjoys.

## BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) was developed as a result of the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act, which gives priority for food service and vending service in federal buildings and facilities to qualified blind vendors. State government allows priority for the BEP to provide vending and food service in state owned facilities in the Capitol Complex. In addition, thanks to an agreement with the State Department of Transportation, the BEP is responsible for all of the vending at the South Dakota interstate rest areas which provide income to help with expenses of operating the program.

The South Dakota BEP has facilities in the following communities:

CITY	FACILITY	FACILITY TYPE
Aberdeen	Federal Building	Snack bar
Aberdeen	USPS Sorting Facility	Vending
Huron	Federal Building and Dakota Central	Vending
Pierre	Kneip Building	Snack Bar/Coffee Shop
Pierre	Becker Hanson Building	Snack Bar/Coffee Shop
Sioux Falls	EROS Data Center	Cafeteria
Sioux Falls	USPS Facilities	Vending
Yankton	Federal Prison	Vending

Most of the facilities also have vending routes that consist of state and federal government buildings.

The Pennington County Court House Coffee Shop was closed 3-14-08 due to an extensive remodel that did not include space for the snack shop. Vendor, Wayne Sumner who had managed the snack shop since 1988 took this in stride by responding that it was probably time to retire. He shared that the business was more of a hobby than a money making venture to him. His mix of humor and philosophy will be missed at the court house and in SBVI.

The vending at the Yankton Federal Prison was impacted in 2008 due to a mandate by the Department of Justice to remove all class 3 vending machines (inmate vending) from institutions. Five individuals currently manage all of the locations with some vendors managing multiple facilities and vending routes.

## BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

Following is a breakdown of sales and net profits earned by BEP vendors in 2008.

1) Gross Sales (Total Income)	<b>\$687,499.10</b>
2) Merchandise Purchases (total cost of goods sold)	<b>\$378,801.03</b>
3) Gross Profit (line 1-2)	<b>\$308,698.07</b>
4) Total Operating Expenses	<b>\$212,515.73</b>
5) Net Income Before Set aside (line 3-4)	<b>\$96,182.34</b>
6) Vending Machine & Other Income	<b>\$42,213.51</b>
7) Net Proceeds (line 5+6)	<b>\$138,395.85</b>
8) Funds Set Aside	<b>\$19,607.29</b>
9) Net Profit to Vendors	<b>\$118,788.56</b>

Bridget Stoesser accepted the Program Specialist position which includes responsibilities for management of the BEP in April of 2008. Formerly a rehabilitation counselor, Bridget has worked to develop opportunities for vendors and support them in their business endeavors. New opportunities have been developed in the State Capitol complex, and vendors continue to promote quality products and services to meet the needs of their customers.

## BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

### **BOARD MEMBERS**

Members of the Board of SBVI are appointed by the Governor of South Dakota. Representation required for membership is defined in the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. Nominations for vacancies are solicited from organizations of the blind and other entities which represent a broad range of individuals with disabilities in the state.

<b><u>Name/Representation</u></b>	<b><u>Appointment Date</u></b>	<b><u>Term End Date</u></b>
Rita Weber (Chair) Business, Blind, Former Consumer	09/23/05	06/30/11
Robert Kean Client Assistance Program	07/01/08	06/30/11
Wesley Scholl Disability Advocacy Group	09/16/05	06/30/09
Dave Miller Blind, Business	07/21/06	06/30/09
Gaye Mattke, Ex Officio SBVI Director		Pleasure of the Governor
Steve Kelsey, Ex Officio VR Counselor, Blind	11/22/05	Pleasure of the Governor
Owen Keith Bundy (Former Chair) Business, Former Consumer, Disability Advocacy Group, Blind	01/28/02	06/30/09
Ed Pinkman Former Consumer, Disability Advocacy Group, Blind	03/03/05	06/30/10
Larry Wheeting Business, Blind, Former Consumer	09/19/05	06/30/11

## **BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

<b><u>Name/Representation</u></b>	<b><u>Appointment Date</u></b>	<b><u>Term End Date</u></b>
Angela Boddicker State Education Agency	10/20/03	06/30/09
Gayle Aamold Blind, Former Consumer	11/05/03	06/30/09
Dennis White Shield 121 Project Representative	10/21/03	06/30/09
Mike Klimisch Business, Former Consumer, Blind, Disability Advocacy Group	12/30/04	06/30/10
Deanne Curran Parent Training & Information Center, Parent of Children w/ Disabilities	07/10/07	06/30/10
Charles Fullenkamp Community Rehabilitation Program	07/10/07	06/30/10

### **BOARD ACTIVITIES**

**Meetings** - As stipulated by the bylaws, the Board meets as often as necessary, as determined by the Chairperson in cooperation with the Director of SBVI, but at least four times per year. Meetings during the report period were held on the following dates and locations:

December 7, 2007: Fort Pierre, SD

April 4, 2008: Sioux Falls, SD

August 1, 2008: Sioux Falls, SD

November 14, 2008: Pierre, SD

Meetings are open to the public and held at accessible locations. Meetings are announced via the SBVI website, in the VISIONS newsletter and on the State news website as well as through a variety of publications throughout the state.

## BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

### **BOARD COMMITTEES**

**Executive Committee** - The Executive Committee consists of the Board Chair, Vice Chair and Member at Large. This committee handles decisions between regularly scheduled board meetings and other activities assigned by the Board Chair. The Executive Committee serves as the nominations committee by assisting with preparing for annual board officer elections by contacting qualified candidates and determining their interest in serving as a board officer. The Nominations Committee also assists with soliciting potential qualified candidates to fill board vacancies.

**Strategic Planning and Policy Development Committee** - The role of this committee is to provide input for strategic planning and policy development. The Strategic Planning and Policy Development Committee meets via teleconference to thoroughly discuss any changes to policy and brings information to the full Board. This committee has been instrumental in developing the division's strategic plan for the upcoming three years. Other topics studied by the committee included: state plan updates, consumer satisfaction survey, mentoring program and SBVI policy revisions. All recommendations are discussed by the full board and acted upon at quarterly Board meetings.

**Public Relations Committee** - This committee's focus is to improve public relations and disseminate information about the services offered by SBVI. The public relations committee also coordinates board-supported activities such as National Disability Employment Awareness month in October. The committee prepares nominations for the annual Governor's awards luncheon for consideration by the full Board.

**Assistive Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC)** – The main purpose of the resurrected ATAC is to advise SBVI in matters concerning assistive technology (AT) as it affects SBVI consumers and staff. The membership of the ATAC is comprised of individuals who are knowledgeable on software and devices that help individuals who are blind or visually impaired to obtain employment or live independently. Membership will not necessarily be limited to board members, and the SBVI AT Program Specialist will be the division liaison to this committee.

The Board Chair appoints other committees on an "as needed" or ad hoc basis. Ad hoc committees address bylaw updates, special initiatives and priorities based on consumer input, and federal and state priorities.

## BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

### **Board Priorities**

**Public Meetings** - Public meetings are held on an annual basis to solicit input into the State Plan as well as priorities to improve services to citizens who are blind or visually impaired. The Board of SBVI identifies appropriate topics for discussion, makes recommendations on meeting locations and Board members facilitate each of the meetings. Meetings are hosted by consumer organizations of the blind. It was suggested that payment for sponsorship of public meetings be performance based. Organizations were reimbursed based on the following: Up to \$10 per person if transportation is provided, \$10 per ad or promotion, \$50 for hosting a site, up to \$100 for refreshments, and reimbursement for additional expenses incurred if approved.

Sites scheduled for public meetings in 2008 included a Rapid City meeting that was scheduled in conjunction with the National Federation of the Blind state convention and a special video conference/ teleconference meeting which was led by SBVI staff in Pierre with SBVI Board members facilitating sites in Rapid City, Sioux Falls and Aberdeen. Topic ideas included the mentoring program, older blind services, transition, vocational rehabilitation, Focus on Success, low vision services, and assistive technology. Thirty seven people participated in the meeting with a variety of topics discussed at each location and then amongst the full group which included participants who called in as well as those at district office video conference sites.

The Rapid City meeting was postponed due to severe weather; arrangements were made to allow the entire state to participate in the videoconference/ teleconference meeting. This new public meeting format included time for each videoconference site to discuss regional topics and then a facilitated discussion by the full group. This was viewed by Board members as a successful method of enlisting input from participants.

## BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

**Focus on Success III** - A highlight of 2008 was the Focus on Success III conference held in Sioux Falls September 30<sup>th</sup> – October 2<sup>nd</sup>. All entities involved in blindness in the state came together to plan the conference which offered a variety of sessions to address vision loss, employment, education and independence. The Board of SBVI provided input regarding topics and arrangements for the conference. Board members also served as presenters, panelists and participants at the conference.

Nationally renowned presenters joined regional and state experts to share their tips for success to the 124 individuals registered for the conference. A vendor fair offered the opportunity to experience devices and learn about services available to individuals of all ages experiencing vision loss.

Citizens with vision loss who attended the conference expressed both appreciation and enthusiasm over the variety of topics and speakers who addressed a multitude of subjects including assistive technology, parenting a child with a visual impairment to aging with vision loss.

Feedback received reassured us that the “Focus on Success” theme was well received by those who attended. Included in conference evaluations were statements such as: “Now I know there are more possibilities for employment with vision loss”; and “It was good to meet others facing the same issues that I am”; and finally, “When is the next Focus on Success?” The Board of SBVI has recommended 2011 as the target date for the next Focus on Success conference.

### **Joint Activities with Other Boards and Councils**

The Board of SBVI is committed to working with other entities to promote employment and independence for citizens with disabilities. The following collaborative activities were accomplished in 2008:

**Governor's Awards for Employment of People with Disabilities** -The annual Governor's Luncheon is held to recognize the efforts of individuals, employers and organizations for their contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities. This event is a joint effort of the Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Department of Human Services.

**National Disability Employment Awareness Month Activities** - The Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation and SBVI along with the respective divisions in the Department of Human Services plan activities in communities across the state to increase awareness of the capabilities of individuals with disabilities to work. The



## BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Board voted unanimously to contribute \$2,250 to events in 2008. Events were held in Aberdeen, Brookings, Eagle Butte, Madison, Milbank, Mitchell, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Sisseton, Watertown, and Yankton.

**Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)** - Public listening sessions are held in conjunction with each SILC meeting. SBVI consumers and Board members are invited to these sessions which are meant to obtain information to improve independent living services in South Dakota.

**“VISIONS” Newsletter** - Upon recommendation from the Board, the Division reinstated the “Visions” newsletter on a semi-annual basis. The new issues of the newsletter were circulated in January and July of 2008. The Board made recommendations on content and distribution for the newsletter. Based on recommendations from the Board, the VISIONS will continue to be published two times per year with topics recommended by the members of the Board of SBVI.

**Telephone News Reader Service** - This service is a collaborative effort involving the Division and Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, DakotaLink, the SD Braille and Talking Book Library, the Rapid City Journal, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader, the Aberdeen American News and consumer organizations representing people with various disabilities.

Subscribers to the program were contacted to ascertain frequency of use and recommendations for the service. Responses indicated that the majority of subscribers rarely used the service with five to seven individuals accessing the program on a daily basis.

The Telephone News Reader has had frequent technical problems due to newspapers changing formats for web access. The Division will continue to assess issues and solutions and ask for the Board’s input on the status of the Telephone News Reader.

### **Consumer & Board Member Attendance at Blind Organization Conventions**

The Board of SBVI has made the commitment to financially support the cost for attendance of two consumers each year at the state conventions of the National Federation of the Blind of SD (NFB) and SD Association of the Blind (SDAB). The Board has also made the commitment to have representation from the Board at each of the blind organization state conventions. Board representatives attended the NFB and SDAB State Conventions in 2008 and reported on activities to the full Board.

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**Mentoring Program** - The Board of SBVI has been instrumental in developing a mentoring program. The mission of the mentoring program is to extend support, encouragement, and knowledge to consumers by linking them up with experienced blind citizens. Many members of the Board have agreed to serve as mentors for consumers who are interested in participating in the program. To date there have been limited requests for mentors.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Activities** - The Board voted unanimously to support an ADA anniversary celebration in Sioux Falls by contributing \$500 to help defray costs. The celebration was held July 26th and was featured on KELO television. Dawn Backer was on the planning committee and reported that about 400 people were served. The event was held at Sertoma Park and included entertainment by Music Unlimited and SD Expressions. Mayor Munson attended and awards were presented to Roger Martin who started a ski program for people with disabilities at Great Bear Recreation Park; Great Bear received an award as the business recognized for supporting the ADA.

**Policies and Procedures** - The Division shares all draft policies with the Board of SBVI for their input prior to implementing the policies. New policies introduced during the prior year include:

1. Residency Requirement for VR Applicants and Individuals being Served by Multiple State Public VR Agencies: this policy provided policy and clarification on the requirement that eligible SBVI consumers must be present and available in the State. It also provides guidance on the possibility of multiple state public vocational rehabilitation programs serving one individual and notes the requirement that applicants of vocational rehabilitation are able to be authorized to work in the United States.
2. Assistive Technology Referral Procedures and Policy: this policy was implemented to ensure that quality Assistive Technology (AT) devices and services are provided in a timely manner.
3. Policy on Self-Employment: this revised program guide contains policy, clarification, and guidance on the provision of self-employment services for consumers of SBVI.
4. SBVI Mentoring Program: an initiative of the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired the Mentoring Program was established to meet the unique needs of current and former consumers of the SBVI VR and ILB programs in South Dakota. The mission of the program is to extend support, encouragement, and knowledge to active consumers of SBVI from experienced blind citizens. The outcome desired is a meaningful relationship that benefits the consumer in adjusting to their blindness.

## **BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

### **Future Initiatives**

Advising SBVI on the implementation of quality assurance activities has been and continues to be a focus of the Board of SBVI. The Board and Division prioritize activities that will ensure that quality services are delivered in the most efficient manner. It is anticipated that an analysis of consumer satisfaction survey results will assist in developing services and programs that meet the needs of SBVI consumers. In addition, case file reviews, public input and data analysis are all pieces of the comprehensive state wide needs assessment which identifies needs of South Dakota citizens to be addressed by SBVI.

### **Closing Message**

The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired recognizes that these are challenging financial times for both our state and nation. We firmly believe that part of the solution to these financial difficulties is to ensure that public programs provide people with the skills, motivation and opportunity to be self-sufficient. For the coming year the Board's focus will be on improving program outcomes to help offset the greater demands being place on public resources. We are confident that the Service to Blind and Visually Impaired staff are up to the challenge.

Dave Miller, CSD Chief Administrative Services Officer  
Current Chair of the Board of SBVI



South Dakota has often been referred to as the land of infinite variety. That variety is reflected in everything from our weather to our scenery, our economy to our state symbols and more. Here are some useful and interesting South Dakota facts.

### **South Dakota Facts**

**Population:** 754,844 (2000 Census)

**State Capital:** Pierre (*pronounced peer*)

**Nickname:** The Mount Rushmore State

**Statehood:** 1889

**State Song:** Hail, South Dakota

**State Motto:** Under God the People Rule

**State Slogan:** Great Faces. Great Places.



South Dakota ranks 16th in size among the 50 states. It was the 40th state to join the Union in 1889. South Dakota encompasses 77,123 square miles, averaging 10 people per square mile.

It has the highest point in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains (Harney Peak in the Black Hills; elevation 7,242 feet) and more miles of shoreline than the state of Florida.

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